



Education Resources

Supporting Children in Unsettled Times

Purpose

This information has been produced by our Educational Psychologist team to help provide some guidance for families and carers during this period of the coronavirus pandemic.

We are currently experiencing unsettled times. We may be concerned and worried about what the next few months will have in store for all of us.

However, we know from previous experience that children of all ages and stages do best when they are supported by the adults who are closest to them. The ideas below are suggestions about how you can support your child and yourself during this time.

1. Offering a listening ear

Depending on their age, children will have already picked up a lot of information about COVID-19 from school, their friends, social media, the news, or from listening to and watching the reactions of others around them (including their parents/carers). It is important to provide opportunities for children to express their thoughts and feelings about the current situation. All behaviour is a form of communication; try to remember that what looks like 'acting out' may be a child's way of expressing worry about what is going to happen over the next few months.

2. Offer reassurance

Depending on their age, reassurance to a child. This show be around how you express your love in a way that shows openly how you care and understand how your child(ren) maybe feeling.

- *more family time, or reminders that they are safe and that you are there to look after them. Let your child know that it is normal to be worried and upset sometimes. If your child does see you getting upset, use this as an opportunity for them to learn that these feelings won't last forever.*

3. Provide the right amount of accurate information

It is important that you provide honest answers to your child's questions about COVID-19. Providing factual information is very important to ensure that misinformation and a vivid imagination doesn't make things seem scarier. However, always remember to adjust the information you provide by thinking about the age of your child, and their ability to cope and process information. For example an S3 child will be able to understand the concept of a pandemic, but a p4 child will cope better if you explain that there is a bug going around that can make people feel a bit unwell and that most people recover.

Providing practical advice is important (e.g. regarding handwashing, catching coughs), and NHS Public Health can help provide guidance.

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4. Emphasise strengths and helping

It can be helpful for both you and your child to remember back to other times when things were difficult, but you managed to cope and get through. Focus on your own and your child's strengths to get through this time. Sometimes thinking about helping others can make us feel better. For example, telephone calls to friends and family can be reframed as your child's way of helping others.

5. Try to follow a routine

First and foremost, try to continue with whatever normal family routines that you can. If you are self-isolating, try to keep normal waking hours. If you normally eat together as a family, continue to do that too. Think about structuring the weekdays around pieces of school work your 4+ child may have been set, and treat weekends a bit more like 'fun' – play games, have a movie night, etc. It can be helpful to 'break down' the day into small chunks of activity whatever your child's age.

6. Consider this period of time as an 'opportunity'

Although this may feel hard, look on this time as an opportunity to do more things together as a family. Have fun reading, playing and learning life skills together.

7. Look after yourself

This is a difficult time for everyone, and we all cope with stressful times in different ways. It is important to make sure you look after your own health and wellbeing so that you can continue to support your child and others who rely on you. This means keeping a routine yourself, maintaining contact with friends and family, exercising, and eating and drinking healthily. Although it can be helpful to keep up-to-date with official guidance and information about COVID-19, try to limit the amount of unnecessary exposure you all have; this can increase worry. Instead, look for positive on-line messages and supports.

Here are some ideas about activities you could try with your child if they are away from school: <https://medium.com/pobble/simple-and-fun-non-screen-activities-that-children-can-do-at-home-115543cb3b9c>